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A DICKENS'S REVIVAL

by
Ema Suekow Hunting



A DICKENS REVIVAL

By
EMA SUCKOW HUNTING

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Foreword

There have been many attempts to dramatize Dickens; and in spite of the almost universal failure of these attempts, the novels and tales of this most dramatic of story tellers seem still to offer irresistible temptation to writer folk. Indeed, the characters which throng the pages of his books seem created expressly for the theatre, so vivid are they, so individual yet so typical; and the stories abound in situations of humor and pathos and tragedy rich in dramatic possibilities. Yet there has never been a really successful dramatization of Dickens.

In this little drama, "A Dickens Revival", there has been no attempt to succeed where so many have failed. It is not a dramatization; such plot as there is, is original and serves merely to bring together some forty of the best loved characters of the Dickens world. The aim has been to make and keep them really Dickens people, though presented in situations and relations foreign to the novels in

which they are found; and in this I feel that I may claim some measure of success. Necessarily many, many of the choicest spirits are left out and the more serious elements of character are of course not presented; yet the people of this play are Dickens people, and as such will find, I feel sure, a welcome and appreciation among Dickens lovers, and may even serve to introduce into the delights of Dickens fellowship some few of those who have held aloof, appalled by the length and number of his works.

EMA SUCKOW HUNTING.

January, 1914.

A Dickens Revival

By

EMA SUCKOW HUNTING

CHARACTERS

MISS BROWNLEY, *the librarian*

A typical custodian of the public reading matter, in plain and tasteful business dress.

MRS. JARLEY

A Christian lady, stout and comfortable to look upon, who wears a large bonnet, trembling with bows.

MR. PICKWICK

A rubicund little gentleman, with a bald head and circular spectacles, wearing a coat with tails, and tights and gaiters. He carries a notebook and pencil.

SAM WELLER

Habited in a coarse striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves and blue glass buttons; drab breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief is wound in a loose and unstudied style around his neck, and an old white hat is thrown carelessly on one side of his head.

Mrs. JELLEBY

A pretty, very diminutive, plump woman of thirty or forty, with handsome eyes which have a curious habit of seeming to look a long ways off. Her dress is careless and disordered.

Mrs. NICKLEBY

A middle-aged lady in mourning, still rather pretty in a soft, inconsequent way.

Mr. WILFER

The conventional cherub, rather gray, with signs of care in his expression.

Mrs. WILFER

Tall, angular, and stately, her head tied up in a pocket handkerchief knotted under her chin, and wearing impressive gloves.

Miss LAVINIA WILFER

Angular like her mother, but snappish where that lady is imposing.

Mr. GEORGE SAMPSON

A meek youth, and a bashful, who carries a large stick with a knob on the end of it, which knob he keeps in his mouth, like a stopper, only removing it for purposes of speech and nourishment.

SAIREY GAMP

A fat old woman with a husky voice and a moist eye which she has a remarkable power of turning up and only showing the white. Having very little neck, it

costs her some trouble to look over herself at those with whom she talks. She wears a very rusty black gown, rather the worse for snuff, and a shawl and bonnet to correspond.

BETSEY PRIG

Of the Gamp build, but not so fat; her voice is deeper and more like a man's. She has also a beard.

MR. PECKSNIFF

A moral man. His very throat is moral, and you see a good deal of it over a very low fence of white cravat—a valley between two jutting heights of collar. His hair, all brushed off his forehead, stands bolt upright. His person is sleek. He wears a plain black suit and a dangling eyeglass.

CHARITY PECKSNIFF

Rather angular and sedate, the complement of her sister.

MERCY PECKSNIFF

The most arch and at the same time the most artless creature, too fresh and guileless to wear combs in her hair, or to turn it up, or to frizzle it, or to braid it. She wears it in a crop, a loosely flowing crop, which has so many rows of curls in it that the top row is only one curl. Moderately buxom is her shape, yet quite womanly, too; but she wears a girlish pinafore, and how charming it is!

MRS. PERRYBINGLE

Fair and young, though somewhat of what is called the dumpling shape; with a little figure and a delicate head and a very doll of a baby.

TILLY SLOWBOY

Of spare and straight shape, so that her garments seem to be in constant danger of slipping off those sharp pegs, her shoulders. Her costume is remarkable for its partial development of a flannel vestment of a singular structure, also for affording glimpses, in the region of the back, of a pair of stays in color a dark green. She is in a continual state of gaping admiration, which leads to a propensity for knocking the baby's head into everything within reach.

MR. BOFFIN

A broad, round-shouldered, one-sided old fellow, dressed in a pea overcoat and carrying a large stick. He wears thick shoes and thick leather gaiters and gloves. He has bright, eager grey eyes under ragged eyebrows and a broad-brimmed hat.

MRS. BOFFIN

A stout lady of a rubicund and cheerful aspect, dressed in a low evening dress of sable satin and a large black velvet hat and feathers.

SILAS WEGG

A knotty, close-grained individual, seemingly as wooden as his leg.

JENNY WREN

A dwarf, half child, half woman, with a sharp little face, shrewd beyond its years, and beautiful golden hair. She walks with a crutch, but nimbly.

DOLLY VARDEN

A bright, fresh, coquettish girl, with a buxom figure,

and a rosy face lighted up by a lovely pair of sparkling eyes. She wears a cherry-colored mantle and ribbons, and the most devastating hat that ever malicious milliner concocted for the undoing of mortal man.

SUSAN NIPPER

A short, brown, womanly girl, with a little snub nose, black eyes like jet beads, and a peculiarly sharp and biting manner.

MR. TOOTS

A wealthy young gentleman with a swollen nose and excessively large head, a deep voice, sheepish manner, and carefully cultivated, immature whiskers. His costume is in the extreme of tightness as to pantaloons, and gorgeousness as to waistcoat and cravat.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

A quiet, well-manned young man, with a studious face.

DORA

A diminutive beauty, with a delightful voice and artless, coaxing ways. She has quantities of curls, and wears a white chip bonnet and a dress of celestial blue.

URIAH HEEP

A red-haired youth with a cadaverous face. He is high-shouldered and bony; dressed in decent black, with a white wisp of neckcloth; buttoned up to the throat; and he perpetually rubs together his long, thin, bony hands.

PEGOTTY

A girl with no shape at all, and eyes so dark they seem to darken all that part of her face, and with

cheeks and arms so hard and red that the birds might peck them in preference to apples.

BARKIS

A stolid man, with a large head, which he carries with an habitual droop.

TRADDLES

A very nervous young man in a continual state of surprise, which makes his hair stand up very straight, and his eyes almost pop from his head.

MR. MICAWBER

A stoutish, middle-aged man in a brown surtout and black tights and boots, with no more hair upon his head—a very large one and very shining—than there is upon an egg. His clothes are shabby, but his shirt collar is imposing. He carries a jaunty sort of stick with a large pair of rusty tassels; and a quizzing glass hangs outside his coat, purely for ornament.

MRS. MICAWBER

A thin and faded lady, not at all young, with the marks of gentility in voice and manner.

THE CHILDREN.**SMIKE**

Tall, thin, in very ragged clothes.

PAUL DOMBEY

A pretty little fellow about five years old, with fair hair.

FLORENCE DOMBEY

A quiet, dark-eyed girl of about eleven, with long curls and a black dress.

TINY TIM

A very mite of a child, with a little crutch and a pale, happy face.

SLOPPY

Too much of him longwise, too little of him broadwise, and too many sharp points of him anglewise; one of those shambling male creatures born to be indiscreetly candid in the revelation of buttons, and with a surprising habit of throwing back his head and laughing immoderately.

THE MINDERS

Two plump tots, boy and girl, in gingham aprons.

OLIVER TWIST

A lad of eight or nine, in trousers too long for him and coat too short for him, and both very ragged.

LITTLE EM'LY

A beautiful little blue-eyed girl with a white frock and a necklace of blue beads.

Jo

Very muddy, very hoarse, very ragged, with a big, round broom for street sweeping.

CHARLEY

A very little girl, childish in figure, wearing a womanly sort of bonnet much too large for her and wiping her bare arms on her apron.

TOM

A mite of a boy.

EMMA

A heavy baby of eighteen months.

A BOY

A very ordinary boy of the present time, perhaps sixteen years of age, in a waterproof coat and hat.

[The costumes may best be determined upon by consulting an edition of Dickens' Works which contains the original, or at any rate, early illustrations; and a part of the pleasure of presenting this little fantasy will be found in collecting the old-fashioned garments which any community can furnish in unexpected number and variety. The descriptions given of the characters have been adapted for the most part from the books themselves, thus giving the idea of each which the author himself had in mind. The entertainment may be either shortened or lengthened by adding to or omitting any characters as desired. As given in the text, it will play about an hour, including the prologue, and calls for forty-six characters, young and old.]

The Prologue

TO BE SPOKEN BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS.

“Of the making of books there is no end;” but of the reading of some books—good books—there is an untimely end. We speak of deathless works of art, of immortal pieces of writing; yet a book is really dead when it is no longer read. The greatest book can live only in the brain and heart of a reader.

But, unfortunately, there are fashions in books as there are fashions in manners, morals and clothes; and the story which one day set half the world laughing and crying and thrilling in sympathy, the next day is passed over for a “best seller” which in its turn is forgotten. We would not quarrel with this order of things which makes for progress; but we do believe that it is only in outer expression that the great truths of human character and needs change, and that a master mind which comprehends these truths has a message for all times, regardless of modes of expression.

Such a mind had Charles Dickens; and tonight we wish to take you into the dream-world which that mind created—a dream-world peopled with dream-folk, but so real, so true, so human, and so amusing that they seem more material than flesh and blood itself. Here, you will say, is life itself; and here, it may be, you will see your very neighbor, yes, your very self, crystal-clear, in every light and shade of truth.

For some of you this will be a meeting of old and tried friends; for the others, we trust it will prove the beginning of a happy companionship. For all, it must shed a new light on the dark riddle of human nature; for in this dream-world you will find every fault, every virtue, every vice, every hidden meanness, every secret nobility, every foible and hypocrisy, so skillfully set forth, with such pitiless truth but such tender understanding, that the eyes are cleared perforce, and the world of every day becomes a saner, cheerier place, with more good natured laughter and fewer bitter tears.

Dear friends, it is with real pleasure that we welcome you into the fellowship of the dream-world of Dickens; and we beg your kindly interest in our simple play, "A Dickens Revival."

A Dickens Revival

A Fantasy in One Act and Three Scenes

SCENE 1.

[*The receiving room of a public library. The loan desk is at the right, well down, with the files, books, rubber stamps, etc., peculiar to library work upon it. A door at the extreme back left-hand corner is marked plainly "STACK ROOM." There may be book cases etc., to add to the effect. Miss Brownley is discovered at her desk, reading, her cheek on her hand.*]

MISS BROWNLEY [*Laying down her book, yawning*]: Oh—Oh! I'm tired! Rain, rain, rain, and not a soul in the library for hours.

[*She pushes away her book.*] Books—I'm sick of them! Dead, black and white, lifeless things! The whole libraryful is not worth a single conversation with a real live human!

[*She rises, crosses to the clock.*] Eight o'clock! Another hour. And how still it is here—almost as if the very books were asleep and dreaming on their shelves—goodness, I musn't get nervous!

[*She opens the stack room door, peers inside.*] Nobody there, of course. Just the books, and they can't hurt anyone. Poor things—how quiet they are, and how helpless, unless some one opens and reads them. But tonight I wish they were people—I've a notion to close up and go home! There won't be any one in——

[*She goes back to her desk.*] Still, if there should be—and the Carnegie Free Public Library should be closed to a tax-payer, what a scandal it would be! O-oh!

[*Yawning, she resumes her seat.*] Anyhow, a nap will do no harm, and I'm bound to waken if anyone comes in—O-o-h, I'm so s-sleepy—

[*Her head sinks onto her folded arms. Once she sits erect, rubs her eyes, tries to rouse herself, but is overtaken with a third yawn, and giving it up, puts her head down and settles herself for thirty winks. After a moment the curtain falls.*]

SCENE 2.

[*The curtain rises again almost immediately. The scene is the same. Miss Brownley, apparently wide awake, sits at her desk, filling in cards. The stack room door opens a crack, and Mrs. Jarley peeps in, turns and motions for the others to wait, and then advances, smiling and mincing, into the center of the stage.*]

MRS. JARLEY: I wish you good evening, ma'am!

MISS BROWNLEY [*Rising, astonished*]: Oh—.

MRS. JARLEY: And I hope I see you well? Miss Brownley, the librarian, I believe.

MISS BROWNLEY: Why—why, dear me? Who—who are you?

MRS. JARLEY: Ah—when I tell you, you'll be surprised, my dear! Tell me—did you ever hear of Jarley's wax-works?

MISS BROWNLEY: Wax-work?

MRS. JARLEY: Jarley's, ma'am—Jarley's wax-works! Come—a lady like you not know Jarley's! The genuine and only Jarley—the delight of the nobility and gentry—the one stupendous collection of real wax-work in the world! Come, come, ma'am, at your age, not know Jarley's!

If I had a donkey wot wouldn't go
To see Mrs. Jarley's wax-work show,
Do you think I'd acknowledge him?
No, no, no!

MISS BROWNLEY: But—but do you mean—Of course I have heard of Mrs. Jarley and the wax-work, but—

MRS. JARLEY: Aha, my dear! Of course you have! And so I told them! Leave it, I says, to Mrs. Jarley, the one and only collection of life-size wax-works on the market! I'll introduce, you, I says—I'll show you up—I'll point out your names and wirtues—being so used to wax-works.

MISS BROWNLEY: But—but I don't understand. Whom do you wish to introduce?

MRS. JARLEY: Who, ma'am? Why, the Dickens people, to be sure.

MISS BROWNLEY: The Dickens people?

MRS. JARLEY: Yes, yes! I confess you surprise me, ma'am—I do confess it! Not know the Dickens people?

MISS BROWNLEY: Why, of course I know them—but I thought—

MRS. JARLEY: You thought they only lived in books! Ha, ha, I know wot people thinks! But at night, ma'am, when all the doors are closed, and all the lights are out—what then, do you think?

MISS BROWNLEY: What?

MRS. JARLEY: Then we comes out—down off our shelves, and out of our covers, and stretches of ourselves! And then's when we talk it over.

MISS BROWNLEY: Talk what over?

MRS. JARLEY: The way we're neglected and passed over and shoved aside. Day after day on our shelves, ma'am, without a blessed wolume being taken down! And all around us other books that people reads by armfuls. And we, growing old

and yellow, forgotten in our corners! David Copperfield is out now, and out so long a fine is due; but the others of us—ah, I tells you what, ma'am, it makes me low in my spirits! Once the delight of the world that couldn't wait for us to dry after printing and laughed and cried and took on over us more than over their own kith and kin—and now, passed by and forgotten! Such is the unfickleness of human nater!

MISS BROWNLEY: Do you mean that the Dickens books are seldom taken out of the library—is that the trouble?

MRS. JARLEY: Ah—and trouble enough! But, says I, leave it to Mrs. Jarley! We'll watch our chance, says I, and make friends with the librarian, for if she knows us she can't help but like us, and she'll tell others and so we'll be taken out again and not be forgot and wither in our bindings. I'll introduce you, I says—leave that to me—as if you was wax-works; and wery good wax-works you will make; for though I won't go so far as to say that I've ever seen wax-work quite like life, yet I've certainly seen some life that was exactly like wax-work!

MISS BROWNLEY: And are they here now—the Dickens people?

MRS. JARLEY: Just outside the door, ma'am, waiting for me to call them in, if so be you'd like to see them.

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, yes, yes—by all means. Do call them in, Mrs. Jarley.

MRS. JARLEY: Very well, ma'am; and as I've always said, I knowed you was a lady. Here they come then—one, two, THREE!

[She strikes the floor sharply with the pointer she carries; and immediately the stack room door opens and the Dickens people enter. They are in the order in which they are later introduced; and they form a long line across the stage, slant-wise.]

MRS JARLEY: We are the Dickens people, ma'am, and we presents our compliments! [They all bow.]

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, how do you do?

THE DICKENS PEOPLE: Pretty well, thank you, ma'am, and hope you are the same.

MISS BROWNLEY: I'm so glad you came and I want to know every one of you.

MRS. JARLEY: Well, ma'am, if you're ready, we'll begin the introducing.

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, yes—do tell me who they are.

MRS. JARLEY: We'll start, ma'am, with the gentleman on your right, as being handiest. [*Indicating Mr. Pickwick with her cane.*] The first number in our collection, ladies and gentlemen—you'll excuse me, ma'am, but it comes so natural after wax-works—the first number of our world-renowned aggregation of celebrities is the well-known Mr. Pickwick, of immortal glory in consequence of having been sued by a widow and founding a club which bears his name.

MR. PICKWICK [*Bustling forward*]: Happy to meet you, ma'am, very happy to meet you! Now, how many volumes would you say there might be in this library?

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh—several thousands.

MR. PICKWICK: Several thousands! Bless my soul! And all stacked up in rows. Astonishing! We must put this in the note-book—we positively must, Sam!

SAM WELLER: Right you are, sir, as the gentleman said ven they asked him if he'd have a pint o' rum.

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, is this Sam Weller?

SAM WELLER: The wery same, ma'am, asking your pardon and no offense.

MISS BROWNLEY: And do you still write valentines?

SAM WELLER: Vell, I tell you wot, ma'am, as my father says, "Samivel," he says, "Samivel, valentines is all wery well for them as likes 'em—everybody to his taste, Sammy, as the old lady said ven she kissed the cow—but as for me—."

MR. PICKWICK: Sam! Hold your tongue.

SAM WELLER: Wery well, sir, the same to you, sir, as the —.

MR. PICKWICK: Sam!

SAM WELLER: Yes, sir.

MR. PICKWICK: About this library, Miss Brownley; you astonish me! Thousands of volumes! And can you read them all with equal ease?

MISS BROWNLEY: Why, certainly, Mr. Pickwick.

MR. PICKWICK: Dear me, you surprise me. Most extraordinary thing I ever heard. Wonderful, really—thousands of volumes, and she can read them all. Sam, you must remind me to note this in my next volume of travels.

SAM WELLER: The more the merrier, sir, as the proud father said ven they showed him the twins.

MR. PICKWICK: Sam!

SAM WELLER: Yes, sir?

MR. PICKWICK: Have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes until we ask for them.

SAM WELLER: Mum's the word, sir!

MRS. JARLEY: The next specimen in our interesting and unexampled collection—wax-works again, ma'am—noted as a lover of the heathen and an aider and abetter of infidels in general, is Mrs. Jelleby.

MRS. JELLEBY: I'm very glad indeed to have the pleasure of meeting you. You find me, as usual, very busy, but that you will excuse. I suppose you are acquainted with the natives of Africa? I assure you our project at present employs my whole time. But I am happy to say it is advancing. We hope by this time next year to have a hundred and fifty to two hundred healthy families educating the natives and cultivating coffee in Borrioboola-Gha on the left bank of the Niger.

MISS BROWNLEY: Dear me, that must be very—gratifying.

MRS. JELLEBY: It **IS** gratifying. It involves the devotion of all my energies, such as they are; but that is nothing.

MR. PICKWICK: Did you say—I **BEG** your pardon—but **DID** you say Borrioboola-Gha?

MRS. JELLEBY: Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger. [*Handing him some tracts.*] I should be more than delighted, Mr. Pickwick, if you would honor our poor efforts by turning your thoughts to Africa. These tracts will explain our project.

MR. PICKWICK: But, madame, the climate—.

MRS. JELLEBY: Is the best in the world—with precaution.

MR. PICKWICK: Astonishing! And the natives?

MRS. JELLEBY: Perfectly harmless—with precaution.

MR. PICKWICK: Indeed! But black, I presume?

MRS. JELLEBY: Only on the outside. [*To Miss Brownley, handing tracts.*] If you would like to look over some remarks on that head and on the general subject —.

MISS BROWNLEY: Thank you. I suppose if you devote so much of your time to Africa, you have no family of your own?

MRS. JELLEY: Family? Oh, yes. There are—well, the exact number slips my mind, but it is quite immaterial. The important fact is that one should devote oneself heart and soul to a Mission.

MISS BROWNLEY: How very modern! And this lady, Mrs. Jarley?

MRS. JARLEY: Mrs. Nickleby, ma'am, mother of Nicholas and Kate. Mrs. Nickleby—Miss Brownley.

MRS. NICKLEBY: Oh, how do do, Miss Brownley? Brownley—Brownley! Where did I hear that name before? Or perhaps I didn't and it's just the color makes me think of christenings. Yes, that must be it—brown you know, because I recollect perfectly that the day before Nicholas was christened at five weeks and three days we took a drive in a hackney coach, poor dear Mr. Nickleby and I though I told him I don't know how many times that I knew we'd regret the money if we spent it; but of course he wouldn't listen to me, he never did, though I'm sure I never let a chance go by to impress it on his mind, and that's one comfort—Well, the horse was brown; and sure enough, just as I knew he would, he dropped dead just around the corner from

the house where the pastry cook accidentally killed himself by putting a pistol to his teeth and pulling the trigger. But now I come to think of it, I don't believe it's that—I believe it must be your face. Upon my word, I'm sure it is, because I recollect that when my poor dear husband and I came home after we were married that a young lady brought me home a white chip morning bonnet and she was as like you as two peas. Now what was her name? I know it began with B and ended with Y—but whether it was Austin—Anyhow, my dear, she was your express image, though I can't recall just this minute whether I ever saw her or not.

MR. PICKWICK: Remarkable, madame!

MRS. NICKLEBY: Oh, as to that, sir, far be it from me to express an opinion as to my own attainments though I remember perfectly how my poor dear husband used to suffer before we were engaged when I used to hate him. Shall I ever forget the night I refused to let him carry my sunshade—no, of course it couldn't have been a sunshade at night—but the principle is the same and it's a mercy he didn't emigrate. It very nearly drove him to it. And I recollect—.

MRS. JARLEY: I must say, Mrs. Nickleby, that it might be better if you was to try recollecting that there are others in this collection to be introduced and we can't take all night, sunshades or no sunshades!

MRS. NICKLEBY: Well, upon my word!

MRS. JARLEY: Next in our collection, Miss Brownley—and I'm frank to say in many respects wax-works is to be preferred to humans!—let me call your attention to a family party complete barring six or seven—Mr. R. Wilfer, Mrs. Wilfer, Miss Lavinia Wilfer, and Mr. George Sampson.

MR. WILFER: Why, thank you, ma'am, thank you. We are very glad to meet you, Miss Brownley. I—My dear, I am afraid you are not enjoying yourself?

MRS. WILFER: Why so, R. W.? I make no complaint. Doubtless I am very well.

LAVINIA: You don't seem very brisk, Ma!

MRS. WILFER: Brisk? Brisk? Whence the low expression?

LAVINIA: Low or not, Ma, that's as may be. But why one should go out in company as if ones under petticoat was a backboard, I do NOT see!

MRS. WILFER: Hold! Peace! Can it be that a child of mine can mention the garment to which you have alluded?

LAVINIA: Well, of course as to being a child of yours, Ma, that's your fault, not mine!

MRS. WILFER: Do you speak like that to me? Pray do you know what would have become of you if I had not bestowed my hand upon R. W., your father?

LAVINIA: No, Ma, I do not; and with the greatest respect for your abilities and information, I very much doubt whether you do either!

MRS. WILFER: Ingrate! Viper!

MR. SAMPSON [*Removing his stopper*]: I say! You know, ma'am, upon my honor, you mustn't. With the highest respect for you, ma'am, upon my life, you mustn't. When a man with the feelings of a gentleman finds himself engaged to a young

lady and it comes to vipers, you know! And after all, ma'am, when all's said and done, we know it's there!

MRS. WILFER: We know it's there!

LAVINIA: Well, really, George, I must say I don't understand your allusions!

MR. SAMPSON: Go it! Oh, yes, go it, Miss Lavinia Wilfer!

LAVINIA: If you mean by "Go it," George Sampson, that I shall leave you—.

MR. SAMPSON: Dearest Lavinia, I adore you!

LAVINIA: Then if you can't do it in a more agreeable manner, I wish you wouldn't! [*He approaches her ingratiatingly, and she gradually thaws until he ventures to slip an arm around her; but encountering a large pin, retires and sucks his cane.*]

MR. WILFER: I really am a little afraid, my dear, that you are not enjoying yourself?

MRS. WILFER: On the contrary, R. W., quite so.

SAM WELLER: And if you're satisfied, I ought to be, as the chambermaid said ven she drank the egg cup full of laudunum.

MRS. JARLEY: And now, ladies and gentlemen, asking your pardon, ma'am, I call your attention to two friends tried and true, known wherever sickness and affliction spreads as Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig.

MRS. GAMP: There are some happy creeturs as Time runs backards with, and you are one, Miss Brownley. Not that he need do anythink but treat you in his most owldacious way for years to come, for young you are and will be. I says to Mrs. Harris only 'tother day—the last Monday evening fortnight as ever dawned upon the Piljim's Projiss of a mortal wale—I says to Mrs. Harris when she says to me, "Years and our trials, Mrs. Gamp, sets marks upon us all!"—"Say not the words, Mrs Harris, if you and me is to continue friends, for sich is not the case. Miss Brownley," I says, making free I confess to use the name, "is one o' them as goes against the obseruation straight; and never, Mrs. Harris, whilst I've a drop of breath to draw, will I set by and not stand up, don't think it!" "I ask your pardon, Mrs. Gamp, and I humbly grant your

grace; for if ever a woman lived as would gladly see her fellow creeturs into fits to serve her friends, well do I know that woman's name is Sairey Gamp." "Mrs. Harris," I says to her, "if I could afford to lay all my fellow creeturs out for nothing, I would gladly do it, sich is the love I bear 'em." "Sairey Gamp," she says, "you raly do amaze me!" "Mrs. Harris," I says, "why so? Give it a name, I beg." "Telling the truth then, ma'am and shaming him as shall be nameless between us, never did I think to see a mortal woman of the female sex so devoted to her friends as you be, ma'am, to Betsey Prig!"

BETSEY PRIG: Get along with you!

MRS. GAMP: Say not so, Betsey Prig, for well you know 'tis true. "Betsey and me, Mrs. Harris," I says, "is like two roses on a stalk; nussing together, turn and turn about, one off, one on; and both on us when pressed to reply will always say to them as hires us, be they ladies or be they gents, 'Don't ask me whether I won't take none or whether I will; but leave the bottle on the chimley piece and let me put my lips to it if I am so disposed.'"

MISS BROWNLEY: Very—very creditable, I'm sure, Mrs. Gamp.

MRS. JARLEY: I now have the honor, friends and fellow townsmen, of pointing out to you the very fixedest star in all the galaxy of moral lights, Mr. Pecksniff.

MR. PECKSNIFF [*Blandly advancing, a daughter on either arm*]: My excellent friend, I beg—no flattery! Modesty—come forward, my dears!—modesty is as some one has so beautifully said the jewel upon the ear of night; the lily of the valley; woman's crowning glory; and—

MERCY [*Shaking her curls*]: Oh my good gracious, pa, you mean hair!

CHARITY: Silly Merry! Always thinking of your curls!

MERCY: La, Cherry, what a proper girl you are! Oh, you naughty, thoughtful, prudent thing!

MR. PECKSNIFF: Playful warblers

MISS BROWNLEY: Your daughters, Mr. Pecksniff?

MR. PECKSNIFF: Yes. Excuse these tears—

excuse the sensibility of a father in gazing upon, as it were, his offspring. For what is man, and why should the spirit of mortal be proud? What are we but coaches? Some of us are slow coaches—.

CHARITY: Goodness, pa!

MR. PECKSNIFF: Some of us, I say are slow coaches; some of us are fast coaches; our passions are the horses and rampant animals too—.

MERCY: Really, pa, how very unpleasant!

MR. PECKSNIFF: And rampant animals too—and virtue is the drag. We start from The Mother's Arms and we run to The Dust Shovel. Oh, my friends, oh my dear friends, let us then stop and think—what kind of a coach am I?

SAM WELLER: Wot suits you, suits me, as the svindler said ven they asked if he'd be shot or hung.

MERCY: Oh, good gracious me! Oh, the horrid thing! Oh, go away, wretch! Oh, he's smiling at me! Oh, oh, oh—.

MR. PECKSNIFF: Mercy, my love, I entreat you to be calm!

MERCY: Make him go away—make him go away! Oh, my goodness gracious! Oh, pa, dearest pa—.

MR. PECKSNIFF: My child!

MERCY: Pa, where are you? Where are you, pa? [*Mr. Pecksniff sneezes.*] That voice! My parent!

MR. PECKSNIFF: Charity, my child, look after your sister. Her feelings, poor angel, have been too much for her delicate strength to endure. My love—. [*Fans her with one of Mrs. Jelleby's tracts.*]

MERCY [*Faintly*]: Pa!

MR. PECKSNIFF: She speaks! She is herself once more!

MRS. JARLEY: Well, all I have to say to that, Mr. Pecksniff, is that I much prefer wax-work! Never in all my experience, up hill and down dale, through the length and breadth of Merry England, did I ever have a single wax-work that had a spell. And this I add, sir, and call me false if you will, that with such goings on and comings up, I might

as well be running a vulgar Punch and Judy in place of Jarley's one and only unparalleled collection of classical wax-work—which I never thought to do, sir, not in the very lowest of my spirits! But it is ever thus—it is ever thus! [*She weeps.*]

CHARITY: What? She calls my sister's nerves a spell? She makes light of my sister's nerves? [*She weeps.*] Oh dearest sister, I will protect you!

MR. PICKWICK: Bless my soul, most extraordinary!

MERCY: Charity, my love, weep not for me! [*She weeps.*] Be calm, sister, like me-e-e.

MR. PECKSNIFF: My loves, I entreat you—.

LAVINIA [*Collapsing on Mr. Sampson's shoulder*]: George!

[*The Perrybingle baby now sets up a wail occasioned by the circumstance of Miss Slowboy's eagerness to see what is passing causing her to use the child as a battering ram to bunt Mr. Boffin out of the way.*]

MR. BOFFIN: There, there, my good girl—this IS a rum go, eh, old lady?

MRS. PERRYBINGLE: Oh, the precious darling! Give it to its mother instantly, Tilly! Mother's little darlin', so it is, bless its eenty-teenty-heartikin! Mercy, Mrs. Jarley, why don't you put a stop to this disturbance? I assure you my child never screams! There, there, the pretty dear!

MRS. JARLEY: Oh, yes, yes—blame me! By all means, blame me! Oh, of course, it's all my fault! [*Here Tilly Slowboy gives vent to a prolonged howl.*] It's all my fault for leaving wax-works and going into humans!

[*The Pecksniff sisters, finding themselves out-classed, gradually subside, and save for sniffs and whimpers, the excitement abates.*]

MR. PECKSNIFF: My dear friends, let us-er-reflect. What have we here? Naught, my friends, but tears, as the poet so well says, idle tears. And idleness, my friends, is one of the worst—.

MRS. JARLEY: And what Miss Brownley thinks of the exhibition, I'm sure I can't imagine!

MISS BROWNLEY: You don't know how much I enjoy it, Mrs. Jarley, really! Do go on and tell me who the others are!

CHARITY: Yes, Mrs. Jarley, I entreat you! Pay no heed to this foolish emotion—it has passed. Pa—.

MR. PECKSNIFF: My child, lean on me!

LAVINIA: You'll prick yourself again, George.

MISS BROWNLEY: Do, Mrs. Jarley, please tell me who is the pretty baby?

MRS. JARLEY: To proceed then, ma'am, in spite of all—though I repeat I much prefer wax-work as being more genteel—I will next present to you Mrs. John Perrybingle.

MRS. PERRYBINGLE [*Bustling out, carrying the baby*]: And the baby, Mrs. Jarley! You wouldn't leave out the baby, b'ess it, muvver's comfort, so it is! Ain't he beautiful, ma'am—don't he look precious in his sleep?

MISS BROWNLEY: Lovely! But tell me, are you the little lady they call Dot, and have you a Cricket on your Hearth?

MRS. PERRYBINGLE: There now! John will call me that, though I tell him not, and I'm sure I don't see why he should. But the cricket—bless you, of course we have it, singing right merrily and bringing us good fortune, I'll be bound. There—the duckie dear is sound asleep. Take him, Tilly, and be careful you don't ram his head into things wooden! This is Tilly Slowboy, ma'am, a faithful girl, but she WILL knock his poor head against things!

TILLY SLOWBOY [*Carrying the baby back to their place in the line.*]: Did its mothers give it to its Tillys then, and did it get its head a-bumped, the precious pets, a-sleeping on its backs. [*She rams Mr. Boffin.*]

MR. BOFFIN: Eh—my good girl!

MRS. JARLEY: We pass now to the next in our unique collection second to none though inferior to wax-work—Mr. and Mrs. Boffin.

MR. BOFFIN: Evening—evening—evening!

MISS BROWNLEY: Good evening! I am very glad to meet you.

MR. BOFFIN: Well now, that's 'andsome of you, ma'am, aint it, old lady? As the lady says, ma'am, my name is Boffin. How do you like it?

MISS BROWNLEY: Very well, Mr. Boffin.

MR BOFFIN: Hear that, old lady? "Wery well." And how do you like the name of Nicodemus? Nick or Noddy? That's my name—Noddy Boffin; Noddy—or Nick—Boffin. How do you like it?

MISS BROWNLEY: It's delightful!

MR. BOFFIN: Haha—hear that! "Delightful!" And this, ma'am—step forrard, old lady—this is Mrs. Boffin—Henerietty, which her father's name was Henery and her mother's name was Etty, and so you have it. Mrs Boffin, ma'am, is a high flier at Fashion, and her make is such that she does it credit.

MRS. BOFFIN: Now, now, Noddy! Although I tell you what, I do want Society!

MR. BOFFIN: Fashionable Society, my dear?

MRS. BOFFIN [*Laughing and clapping her hands.*]: Yes! Lor-a-mussy! When I think of me in a light yellow chariot and pair with silver boxes to the wheels—.

MR. PICKWICK: Astonishing!

MRS. BOFFIN: And with a footman up behind with a bar across to keep his legs from being poled! And two bay horses tossing their heads! And with you and me inside leaning back as grand as ninepence—o—oh! MY!

MR. BOFFIN: What a thinking steam engin my old lady is! And she don't know how she does it—neither does the engin!

MR. PICKWICK: Remarkable!

MISS BROWNLEY: She is charming, Mr. Boffin, and so are you.

MR. BOFFIN: But bless my soul, I was near to forgetting—our literary man, my dear.

MRS. BOFFIN: Good and kind and like you, dearie!

MR. BOFFIN: Wegg, step forrard! You'll excuse me, Mrs. Jarley, if I presents him to the lady myself? Miss Brownley, ma'am, Mr. Silas Wegg, a literary man WITH a wooden leg—and all print is open to him.

MISS BROWNLEY: Is it really?

MR. WEGG: Why, truly, ma'am, I believe you couldn't show me the piece of English print that I wouldn't be equal to collaring and throwing.

MR. BOFFIN: On the spot?

MR. WEGG: On the spot.

MR. PECKSNIFF: And poetry, divinest of the Arts?

MR. WEGG: Well, as to poetry, it comes dearer, sir.

MR. PECKSNIFF: Dearer, my good sir?

MR. WEGG: Account of the amount of strain upon the intellect. And therefore when I drop into poetry, I ask to be considered so fur in the light of a friend.

MISS BROWNLEY: And as we are all friends here, won't you—.

MR. BOFFIN: Drop into poetry? Come, Wegg, what do you say? In honor of the occasion?

MR. WEGG: Well, if you put it that way, Mr. Boffin, I confess I can't refuse; especially as the present festal scene reminds me of the touching ballad—

[Mr. Wegg steps to the centre of the stage, balances himself impressively on his wooden leg, clears his throat, and amid profound attention, thus drops into poetry.]

No malice to dread, ma'am,
No falsehood to fear;
But truth to delight me, Mr. Boffin,
And I forget what to cheer.
Li toddle di om-dee,
And something to guide,
My ain fireside, ma'am,
My ain fireside!

Before that cottage door, Mr. Boffin,
A girl was on her knees;
She waved aloft a snowy flag, Mr. Boffin—and
others,
Which—my eldest brother noticed—fluttered in the
breeze.

She breathed a prayer, Mr. Boffin,
A prayer he could not hear,
And my eldest brother leaned upon his sword, Mr.
Boffin,
And wiped away a tear!

[Loud applause. Mr. Wegg bows low in modest acknowledgment, and retires.]

MRS. BOFFIN: Well now, that's a good one, Noddy.

MISS BROWNLEY: Thank you, Mr. Wegg. I really never heard anything like that!

SAM WELLER: Live and learn, ma'am, as the old maid said when she rescued the kitten from drowning.

MRS. JARLEY: Next on our program, ladies and gentlemen, is a character absolutely unique in the annals of the profession—Miss Jenny Wren, the dolls' dressmaker.

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, I have heard of you, my dear!

JENNY WREN: I daresay you have. That's because my back is bad and my legs are queer.

MISS BROWNLEY: No, no, indeed! And are you really a dolls' dressmaker?

JENNY WREN: And very difficult they are to fit, too, because their figures are so uncertain. You never know where to expect their waists.

MISS BROWNLEY: I hope it's a good business?

JENNY WREN: No. Poorly`paid. And I'm so often pressed for time. I had a doll married last week and was obliged to work all night, and it's not good for me because my back is bad and my legs are queer.

MISS BROWNLEY: I'm sorry your customers are so inconsiderate.

JENNY WREN: It's the way with them. They take no care of their clothes; and they never keep to the same fashions a month. I work for a doll with three daughters. Bless you, she's enough to ruin her husband.

MR. PICKWICK: Dear me, how very surprising!

JENNY WREN: Oh, you think you wouldn't care if YOU were her husband! Hum, I know your

kind—and I know your tricks and your manners! Here, take my card, sir! [*She hobbles toward him and he comes to meet her, takes the card and reads aloud*]

MR. PICKWICK: “Miss Jenny Wren, Dolls’ Dress-maker, Dolls attended at their own residences.” Astonishing! But I never use dolls.

JENNY WREN: Oh, you never play with dolls! Oh no—I know you men! I know your tricks and your manners—get along with you, do! Here’s a doll you’d all like to play with! [*Pointing to Dolly Varden.*]

DOLLY VARDEN: Why, how can you say such a thing?

JENNY WREN: Oh, I know their tricks and their manners! Get along with you, do!

MISS BROWNLEY: And won’t you tell me who this young lady is, Mrs Jarley?

MRS. JARLEY: You’ve heard of her a thousand times, of that I’m sure. Dresses, hats and kerchiefs have been named after her—Miss Dolly Varden.

DOLLY VARDEN [*With a courtesy*]: At your service! Though as to compliments, I never could abide them. And why they should have been made to me, I can not comprehend! It's not my fault if people WILL make love to me, you know!

MR. BOFFIN: That is true, my dear; but you wouldn't say it's their fault either, now would you? Eh, old lady?

SUSAN NIPPER: As no one has asked MY opinion, I'm sure I won't inflict it on them, far be it from me to force their inclinations, they may draw out my two front double teeth, but that's no reason why I should offer them the whole set.

MRS. JARLEY: Indeed! And who asked you to speak without being introduced proper like the others? It's disgraceful! If wax-work takes to introducing itself, what are we coming to, I should like to know? And if you'll do me the kindness, miss, to speak when you're spoken to, I'll be obliged to you.

SUSAN NIPPER: I'm much beholden to you, Mrs. Jarley, and really feel it as a honor to receive your commands being a black slave and a muleteer.

Mrs. Jarley, if there's any other orders you can give me, pray mention 'em.

MR. BOFFIN: My good girl—.

SUSAN NIPPER: Oh, as to that, it's not for me to say; and as to being YOUR good girl, save that for them as craves affection. As for me, I trust and pray I'll always answer to the name of Susan Nipper. And you might keep me in a straight waistcoat for six weeks, and when I got it off, I'd only be more aggravated!

MRS. JARLEY: Aggravated? Do you talk, miss, of being AGGRAVATED? Then I ask you simply this—who is master of this exhibition and introducing the collection—is it you or is it me?

SUSAN NIPPER: Oh, bless your heart, Mrs. Jarley, I hope I knows my place! why didn't you know that, wherever was you born? But wherever you was born, and whenever, and however, which is best known to yourself, bear in mind, please, that it's one thing to give orders and quite another thing to take 'em. A person may tell a person to dive off a bridge headforemost into five and forty feet of water, Mrs. Jarley, but a person may be very far indeed from diving.

MISS BROWNLEY: But I'm sure no one meant to give you orders, Susan.

SUSAN NIPPER: That may be as it is, and them knows best that gives 'em. I may not be a Indian widow, and I am not and would not so become, but if I once made up my mind to burn myself alive, I'd do it!

MR. PICKWICK: Astonishing!

MR. TOOTS: Oh, it's of no consequence!

MRS. JARLEY: What's that? Are you going to introduce yourself too?

MR. TOOTS: Oh—oh, I assure you, I had no intention at all!

MRS. JARLEY: Then what DID you mean when you said—as all that's here will bear me witness—“It's of no consequence?”

MR. TOOTS: I'm sure I beg your pardon. I'm not what is considered a quick sort of person; I'm perfectly aware of that. I don't think anybody could be better acquainted with his own—if it was

not too strong an expression I should say with the thickness of his own head; but as for introducing—.

MISS BROWNLEY: I'm sure you misunderstood the gentleman, Mrs. Jarley. Won't you tell me who he is?

MRS. JARLEY: For your sake, then, and since you ask it—though the collection is a disappointment to me—I don't mind telling you that this is Mr. Toots.

MR. TOOTS [*Embarrassed*]: How d'ye do, Miss Brownley? I'm very well I thank you, how are you? [*Advancing, very bashful.*] Er—how d'ye do, Miss Brownley? I'm very well, I thank you, how are you?

MISS BROWNLEY: Thank you—I am very well.

MR. TOOTS: I'm very well; very well indeed—I am. I don't remember that I was ever better, thank you!

MISS BROWNLEY: I'm glad to hear it.

MR. TOOTS: Oh, it's of no consequence. I—I don't think I was ever so well as I find myself at present, thank you!

SAM WELLER: Vell, vell—as the pussy said ven they put her in. *

MR. TOOTS: Although I—I'm so in love with Miss Dombey, that I'm perfectly sore with loving her!

MR. PICKWICK: Astonishing.

MR. PECKSNIFF: Ah, the ladies! Adorable creatures!

LAVINIA: Take care you don't prick yourself, George.

MR. TOOTS: I know I am wasting away. Burgess & Co.—my tailors, fash'nable but very dear—have had to alter my measure I'm in that state of thinness; and if you could see my legs when I take my boots off, you'd form some idea what unrequited affection is.

MRS. BOFFIN: Well now, that's regularly too bad, young man!

MR. TOOTS: Oh, it's of no consequence. I assure you I am on the verge of the tomb, but it's of no consequence!

MRS. JARLEY: Well, all things considered, Mr. Toots, I really don't think it is!

MRS. NICKLEBY: Before I married my poor, dear husband, there was a young gentleman who used to go to the same dancing school and who WOULD send gold watches and bracelets to our house in gilt-edged paper and who afterwards unfortunately went out to Botany Bay in a cadet ship—a convict ship, I mean—and escaped into a bush and killed sheep (I don't know how they got there) and was going to be hung only he accidentally choked himself to death and the government pardoned him.

MRS. JARLEY: Upon my word and honor, ma'am, I must say we are indebted to you for the story of your life WITH the particulars; however—.

MISS BROWNLEY: My dear Mrs. Jarley, I assure you I am in no hurry and I have enjoyed meeting every one. But surely there are others coming?

MRS. JARLEY: Why ask me, Miss Brownley? Me? Why, goodness gracious mercy sakes! This isn't MY collection, and if ever I gets back to wax-works, which has manners copied exact from the nobility and gentry, I—.

MRS. WILFER [*Impressively*]: Silence!

MR. BOFFIN: Eh? What's up, old lady?

THE MISSES PECKSNIFF: Oh, Pa!

JENNY WREN [*Covering her eyes, with a little cry*]: Oh!

THE OTHERS: Listen! Hush! What is it? Etc.

[*Outside the patter of feet and childish voices are heard. The characters draw back from the stack room door, which is presently opened, and the children appear, talking, dancing, and laughing.*]

ALL: Oh, it's the children—the children—the Dickens children! Come in—come in—come in!

[*The children dance to centre stage. Sloppy bears Tiny Tim on his shoulder; Florence Dombey wheels her little brother in an invalid's chair. The others, clasping hands, dance around in a circle, singing. (Tune, "The Campbells Are Coming.")*]

SONG.

The children are coming, hurrah! hurrah!

The children are coming, hurrah! hurrah!

The children are coming to bring you a greeting,

The children are coming, hurrah! hurrah!

[After the children have sung it once through, the others join them, and sing it all through again, with much clapping of hands and beating time with feet, and hearty good will, ending in a big cheer at the close.]

MRS. BOFFIN: Oh, the little dears!

THE CHILDREN [*Jumping up and down*]: Oh, isn't it fun? Oh, isn't it fun?

MR. WILFER: Fun to stretch your legs a little, eh, my dears?

THE CHILDREN: Oh, yes!

MR. PECKSNIFF: Ah! Buds of promise! Gifts of God!

MISS BROWNLEY: And are these the Dickens children?

ALL: Yes—yes!

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, I am so glad you came!

THE CHILDREN [*With a courtesy*]: Thank you, ma'am.

PIP: I'm glad too. [*Stretching himself.*] I've been shut up in that old book so long, I'm so stiff I can hardly move.

PAUL DOMBEY: Let's all do that.

[*All the children stand on tip toe and stretch their arms above their heads, little Paul lifting his arms too, and Sloppy, with a prodigious big laugh, holding Tiny Tim high in the air.*]

THE CHILDREN: Oh, what fun—oh, what fun!

MISS BROWNLEY: But you all seem so happy. I thought the Dickens children were all sad and unfortunate.

LITTLE NELL [*Stepping forward*]: Oh, we were! When he wrote of us, we were very, very unhappy, as he understood better than any one else. But he made other people understand; and now when we look at little children and see how much more they are loved and cared for than we were, it makes us glad. Doesn't it, children?

THE CHILDREN [*Laughing and clapping their hands*]: Oh, yes, yes—so happy!

MISS BROWNLEY: But won't you tell me all about it?

JO: I can tell you, ma'am, nobody better. 'Cause I'm Jo, that lived by myself in Tom-All-Alone's, and that everybody kept a-telling to "Move on." And I did move on, and I kept a-moving on, and I never did any thing but move on ever since I was born, until there wasn't no place left to move to. But now, when they thinks of me, some folks says "Come in" to boys like me, and takes care of 'em and gives 'em a place to move to.

OLIVER TWIST: And I'm little Oliver Twist, that was born and lived in a work house. And please ma'am, we hadn't nearly enough to eat and I had to ask for more. But people have read about me, and now there are homes and schools and friends for boys and girls left alone.

LITTLE DORRIT: I'm Little Dorrit, ma'am, that lived in a debtor's prison. But there are no such places now, and little children are not shut away from the out of doors.

SMIKE: And I am Smike—you know, Smike, ma'am, the drudge of Squeers' school that wasn't a

school, but a dreadful prison for boys where they were beaten and kicked and half starved and never learned anything? Oh, when I think of Squeers, and the poor boys there, how happy it makes me to see the children here come in from school, warm and rosy, with their books and slates, and to know that I helped to give them such schools.

CHARLEY: I am Charley, thank you, ma'am—Charlotte is my name, but father called me Charley before he died. And this is Tom and the baby is Emma, and I took care of them when mother died too, going out washing and cleaning. I am thirteen, and I can almost reach the tub. I had to lock the children in the room all day; but Tom wasn't afraid of being locked up, was you, Tom?

TOM: No-o.

CHARLEY: Of course he wasn't! And when it come on dark, the lamps was lighted down in the court, and they shone up almost quite bright, didn't they, Tom?

TOM: Almost.

CHARLEY: But now little children don't have to

be locked alone all day, ma'am, and I'm so glad. There are nurseries where they can go and play and have good food, and oh, I like to think I helped to get them for the dears!

LITTLE NELL: I am little Nell, ma'am. It was gambling made my life so hard for me, as it has for many children. My grandfather loved me dearly, but he was caught in that strong current and he could not stop. But now, good people try to stop the gambling, and oh, I hope no other child will ever come to die of it, as I did!

LITTLE EM'LY: I am little Em'ly, ma'am, and lived happy by the sea. But they said I was no lady, though I was good and clean, and so they made me suffer. But in this country, now, any little girl may be a lady who is sweet and good, and that makes me so happy.

PAUL DOMBEY: My name is Dombey—Paul Dombey, and this is my sister, Florence. We would always have been happy, but we were rich, and kept away from other boys and girls because of pride. Do you think people are beginning to love children now, rich or poor, just because they are children and can't help being born?

SLOPPY: Aye, that I do, master! For look at me and these here two little Minders, Toddles and Poddles, we calls 'em, ma'am. All of us was put out by the day, to be minded, and we wasn't nothing to nobody. But bless you, look at such children now, how they're made friends and homes for! Oh, children is thought more of now, and they're happier than they used to be—we know that, don't we, children?

THE CHILDREN [*Clapping their hands*]: Yes, yes—oh, yes!

PIP: Please ma'am, I was brought up by hand, and I don't like to be brought up by hand. I think it's better to be brought up by heart and by head.

TINY TIM: I am Tiny Tim, and have to walk with a crutch. But lots of little children now, like me, are kept strong and well, and lots are cured by good doctors and good mothers and sometime maybe they'll all be well, and can run about and play.

THE CHILDREN: They'll all be well and happy—all the children in the world!

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, my dear children, I'm so glad to know you all! And when I see happy, rosy boys and girls, I'll think of you and know you helped to make them so. Goodbye!

THE CHILDREN: Good-bye—goodbye! [*They turn toward the door, but as they go, they see the Dolls' Dressmaker, with her arm across her eyes.*] Won't you come with us, Jenny Wren? Come and play with us!

JENNY WREN: No, no, no! Get along—get along! I can't play with children—I can't play at all. I belong with the grown-ups. Get along.

TINY TIM [*Leaning down from his perch*]: But you'll come with ME, Jenny Wren! Won't you come with me?

JENNY WREN [*Taking his hand with a happy look*]: Oh, my blessed child! Yes, yes—take me with you, take me with you!

THE CHILDREN: Come along, Jenny Wren—come with us. Good-bye—good-bye!

ALL: Good-bye, good-bye, dear children!

[The children run away, still laughing and calling, Sloppy, Jenny Wren and Tiny Tim last of all, and as he reaches the door, Tiny Tim holds out his little arms and cries, "Good-bye! God bless us every one!"]

MISS BROWNLEY: Oh, Mrs. Jarley, surely this is not all who are coming. There must be many more in this delightful world of people, and I should like to know them all.

MRS. JARLEY: Well, as I told you, ma'am, "David Copperfield" is out, and the Copperfield people might be a little late.

MISS BROWNLEY: But they will surely come?

MR. PICKWICK: Oh, surely, surely! Surprising thing they're being late—strange, very. Sam—.

SAM WELLER: Sam it is, sir!

MR. PICKWICK: Just step to the door and cast your eye along the way and let us know when our friends approach, will you?

SAM WELLER: The hinstant they 'eave in sight I'll tip you the wink, sir! *[He goes to the door.]*

MRS. JARLEY: Ah—there's some folks as has their servants to wait on 'em right down to the ground; and there's others of us as can't get recognition proper not even from our e-kalls.

SAM WELLER: (at the door shouting) Horoar!
[*He turns to Mr. Pickwick, winking violently.*]

ALL: What is it? Are they coming? Etc.

MR. PICKWICK: Sam, you ridiculous fellow—.

MRS. WILFER: The male domestic of Mr. Pickwick is—winking.

SAM WELLER: Right you are, ma'am—right as a shot. Vinking, you know, sir—vinking. Didn't I tell you I'd tip you the vink?

MRS. JARLEY: Do you mean the Copperfield people are coming?

SAM WELLER: Coming? They're here! Horoar!

ALL: Oh, yes, yes—here they are, here they are! Etc. [*David Copperfield and Dora, Uriah Heep, Peggotty and Barkis enter and advance to centre stage.*] Hurry up—hurry up! You are late!

MRS. JARLEY: Miss Brownley, ma'am—well known characters from David Copperfield—Mr. Copperfield himself, Dora his wife (the dog you see on the right is Jip), Uriah Heep, and Peggoty and Barkis. [*They bow.*]

MISS BROWNLEY: I am so glad you came in time and am delighted to meet you. But are there not others from your delightful book?

DORA: You tell her, Doady. Jip, be quiet.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: My friend Traddles and Mr. and Mrs. Micawber started out with us and I assure you I expected to see them here before us. I daresay they will be along shortly.

URIAH HEEP: Oh, indeed you must excuse me, Master Copperfield. I am much too umble to dispute the word of a gentleman so far above me—much too umble—.

MRS. JARLEY [*Sharply*]: What do you mean, you ridiculous creature? Aren't they coming along?

DAVID COPPERFIELD: I think he means that just as we started someone came up to Mr. Micawber and stopped him; so the three were delayed. But I am quite sure not for long.

URIAH HEEP: Oh, thank you, Master Copperfield. You said it so much better than I could do, being so umble. Umble I am, umble I have been, and umble I shall ever be. Thank you, Master Copperfield.

DORA: Oh, don't, please! I'm so frightened!

DAVID COPPERFIELD: Frightened, my own?

DORA: Oh, yes. I don't like him. Why don't he go away?

DAVID COPPERFIELD: Who, my love?

DORA: That man. He frightens Jip. Look, Doady, how he frightens Jip.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: But, my dear, you are unreasonable.

DORA: There! Now you're going to be cross!

DAVID COPPERFIELD: Cross, my love? As if I would or could be cross to you for the world.

DORA: Then don't find fault with me and I'll be good. See Jip stand on just two legs, Doady!

MISS BROWNLEY: And these others you said were Peggoty and Barkis?

MRS. JARLEY: What you hanging back for, Peggoty? Step up and speak to the lady.

PEGGOTY: Thank you kindly, ma'am. I hope I see you well? I'm not what you would call azackly sick myself. Barkis, man! Lawk, won't you speak the lady friendly?

BARKIS [*Touching his forelock*]: Barkis is will-in'.

[*Traddles enters in great excitement, his astonished expression more marked than ever, waving a letter.*]

TRADDLES: Copperfield—where are you? Upon my soul, Copperfield, this is positively—.

ALL: Oh, what is it? What is the matter? Etc.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: My dear Traddles—.

TRADDLES: Positively, Copperfield, this is awful!

ALL: But what—what? Tell us!

TRADDLES: The letter, you know! It's alarming—really.

ALL: A letter!

DOLLY VARDEN: From whom?

TRADDLES: Read it, Copperfield, do! I am positively in that state of alarm!

CHARITY PECKSNIFF: Yes, if you have a spark of pity in your breast, read!

LAVINIA: Hum! Pity! If anyone was to have a little sense now!

DORA: Oh, Doady, how can you frighten me so!

DAVID COPPERFIELD [*Who has been glancing through the letter, holding up his hand for silence*]: Listen! [*He reads,*] "My dear young Friend: The die is cast; all is over. Hiding the ravages of care under a sickly mask of mirth, I set out with the others for the scenes of festivity and delight in which you are even now, I doubt not, revelling. But the slight pecuniary liability which hung over the volume—in short, the fine—"

MISS BROWNLEY: The fine! Four cents is due on "David Copperfield!"

ALL: O-o-h!

DAVID COPPERFIELD: "has overtaken me in a manner alike humiliating to endure, humiliating to contemplate, and humiliating to relate. The result is destruction. The bolt is impending, and the tree must fall."

MRS. JARLEY: The bolt?

MRS. NICKLEBY: The tree?

MRS. BOFFIN: Whatever does the man mean?

SUSAN NIPPER: If anybody was to listen now—.

MR. PECKSNIFF: Allegory, madame—figures of speech—the embroidery of language—.

MISS BROWNLEY: But who is the unfortunate man—.

MRS. WILFER: Silence!

DAVID COPPERFIELD [*Reading*]: "Let the wretched man who now addresses you be a beacon to you through life. He writes with that intention and in that hope. If he could think himself of so much use, one ray of light might by possibility

penetrate the cheerless dungeon of his remaining existence; though his longevity is at present (to say the least of it) extremely problematical.

“This is the last epistolatory communication you will ever receive.

From

The

Beggared Outcast,

Wilkins Micawber.”

ALL: Mr. Micawber!

TRADDLES: Positively, Copperfield, this is—is awful, you know!

MR. BOFFIN: This IS a rum go, eh, old lady?

PEGGOTY: You don't think, do you, David, that he was thinking any of pistols?

ALL: Pistols!

THE LADIES: O-o-h!

TRADDLES: Pistols? God bless my soul, whatever made you think of pistols?

MRS. JARLEY [*Screaming*]: I see it all! I see it all! For what does he say? “This is the last EPISTOLATORY communication”—O-o-oh!

MERCY: Oh, save him, save him! Oh, Pa!

MR. PECKSNIFF: My child, your tender heart!

LAVINIA: George, don't leave me!

MR. TOOTS: Oh, it's of no consequence—I'm sure it means suicide but it's of no consequence—.

ALL: Suicide? O-o-h!

PEGGOTY: Listen! David, isn't that his voice?

[All listen intently, horror-struck. A most jovial song is heard off-stage, caroled in a rich and throaty voice with every sound of heartiness and delight. The characters on the stage draw back from the door. In the clear space thus left, appears Mr. Micawber, his hat very much on one side, his cane tucked gently under one arm, his face glowing with spirit.]

MR. MICAWBER: My friends, congratulate me! Something has turned up!

ALL: Mr. Micawber—Mr. Micawber!

[There are cries of delight and relief, clapping of hands, and much joy, to which Mr. Micawber responds with his best bows.]

THE MISSES PECKSNIFF: He lives—he lives!

SAM WELLER: Horoar!

MRS. WILFER: Back from the tomb!

MR. PICKWICK: Extraordinary!

MR. MICAWBER: My dear friends, this meeting occasions me feelings of the—in short, how do you do?

MRS. JARLEY: Yes, and didn't you give us a turn!

MR. MICAWBER: A turn, madame? A—but good heavens, what is this?

[*A wail is heard outside, increasing in volume and rising in pitch. Consternation once more.*]

MRS. MICAWBER [*Outside.*]: I never will desert Mr. Micawber! I never—I never will do it!

MR. MICAWBER [*Much affected.*]: It is Emma—it is Mrs. Micawber!

MRS. MICAWBER [*Still outside.*]: Mr. Micawber has his faults—I do not deny them—but I never, I NEVER will desert Mr. Micawber!

[She enters, hysterical. Her husband rushes to meet her]

MR. MICAWBER: Emma, my angel, what is the matter?

MRS. MICAWBER: I never will desert you, Micawber!

MR. MICAWBER: My life, I am aware of it!

MRS. MICAWBER [*Screaming*]: He is the parent of the children! He is the father of the twins! He is the husband of my affections—and I ne-ver will desert Mr. Micawber! [*She falls into his arms.*]

MRS. BOFFIN: There, there dearie! Who is asking you to, you know!

MRS. JARLEY: Well, I'm sure! For wax-work to act like this—.

MRS. PERRYBINGLE: Your words do you credit! No more would I desert John!

MR. MICAWBER: Emma, my love, have you recovered?

MRS. MICAWBER: Yes, Wilkins—forgive me!

MR. MICAWBER: Then let us withdraw from the scene that others may taste the joys we may not share.

ALL [*Crowding around them.*]: No, no! Don't go! You must stay! Etc.

MISS BROWNLEY: Mr. Micawber, please do not go! At least until I have thanked you all for coming; and before we part let me assure you—.

MR. MICAWBER: One moment! My friends, I feel that the time is ripe for revealing to you that I have, in anticipation of this—this crisis, caused to be prepared in a public house not far distant a compound of a convivial nature which will—in short, a bowl of punch!

ALL: Punch!

SAM WELLER: Horoar!

MR. MICAWBER: And if someone will immediately convey it hither—.

BARKIS: Barkis is willin'.

[*He goes out. Everyone cheers, and at once all is activity. Copperfield and Traddles drag the small*

table to centre stage. Peggoty and Susan Nipper go out and presently return with two huge trays piled with small glasses. The others gather around in groups, talking.]

MRS. PERRYBINGLE [*To Tilly*]: Take the baby in the corner directly, Tilly, or you'll be sure to drop it into the punch bowl!

MR. PICKWICK [*To Silas Wegg*]: Do you consider punch good for a literary man, sir?

MR. WEGG: Aye—nothink better. It mellers the organ. [*Touching his throat.*]

SAIREY GAMP: —but when it comes to bowls of punch social like among friends, I breaks my rules and does sometimes indulge.

MR. WILFER: I hope, my dear, you will enjoy the punch?

MRS. WILFER: If you wish it, R. W. certainly. At any rate, I shall smile.

SAM WELLER: Horoar! Here comes the punch!

[*Barkis enters with a bowl of punch in which is a substantial ladle. All cheer.*]

MR. MICAWBER [*Taking his place behind the small table.*]: Bring it here, my good fellow, bring it here, my friend! Come, let us gather round, as it were, the flowing bowl!

[*Sam Weller, Sairey Gamp, and Silas Wegg, receiving their punch first, retire to the right of stage and forming a line, sing lustily to the rhythmic thumping of the literary man's wooden leg—*]

Gee up, Dobbin,
Gee up, Dobbin,
Gee up, Dobbin,
Gee up, and gee ho-o-o!

[*All the characters, each with his glass, place themselves so that Mr. Micawber and the punch bowl are in the center; Miss Brownley still behind her desk; Mrs Jarley to the right of Micawber.*]

MR. MICAWBER: My friends, before we partake of the contents of the flowing bowl, let us propose—in short—

ALL: A toast—a toast!

MISS BROWNLEY: And let me give it!

ALL: Hooray!

MISS BROWNLEY: To the Dickens people, and may their name and fame never grow old!

ALL: Hooray—hooray!

MRS. JARLEY: And I have a toast—the best of all!

ALL: Hooray!

MRS. JARLEY: Up with the glasses! A toast to the man who made us—.

ALL: Hooray!

MRS. JARLEY: Don't drink it yet!—to the man who thought us out and wrote us up, to the man who understood and loved us—.

ALL: Hooray!

MRS. JARLEY: Not yet!—to the man we love and honor, we and hundreds of others not with us to-night! Oh, lift your glasses high, and drink—and drink—to Charles Dickens!

ALL: To Charles Dickens! Hooray, hooray, and a hip-hooray!

[The toast is drunk amid the greatest excitement—the baby yells, the dog howls, the wooden leg thumps, and all together give another rousing cheer, which gradually grows fainter and fainter as the curtain falls.]

[It rises again, almost immediately. The stage is exactly as first seen—empty, save for Miss Brownley sleeping at her desk, and a boy in a waterproof coat and hat with a dripping umbrella, who pounds on the desk and calls lustily.]

THE BOY: Hey—I say, wake up! Wake up! This is a nice way to run a library! Wake up!

MISS BROWNLEY *[Starting suddenly out of her sleep.]*: Oh, don't go—don't go—OH! *[She stares vacantly around the empty room.]*

THE BOY: That's right! I been pounding on this desk for five minutes enough to wake the dead! I brought back the book I had out, and here's four cents I owe on it.

[He puts the book and the coppers on the desk, picks up his umbrella, and starts off, whistling shrilly through his teeth. Miss Brownley stops him at the door.]

MISS BROWNLEY: Just a moment! What book did you have out?

THE BOY: "David Copperfield." *[Exit.]*

[The librarian picks up the book, looks at it with wonder, and presses it to her breast.]

MISS BROWNLEY: A dream!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.





